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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how fourth- and eighth-grade students in rural Arkansas perceive other countries. Students in fourth grade (N=153) chose among 22 terms to describe Canada, China, Egypt, England, France, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Spain, and the United States. Eighth graders (N=90) were asked to describe separately a set of nations and their people. They were asked about the same countries as the fourth graders except that Canada was omitted and East Germany and India were added to the list. Fourth graders knew more about the United States than about the other countries. Canada was the foreign country they knew the most about and the only one characterized as "like us." The only nation characterized as "warlike" and "unfriendly" was Russia. Eighth graders showed stronger opinions about some countries than did fourth graders, but like them, knew most about the United States. The foreign countries they knew the most about were England, France, and Russia; little was known about Egypt, Israel, East Germany, and Mexico. Concepts associated with geography and economics were discussed more accurately than ones associated with history and political science. (IS)

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THE PERCEPTION OF OTHER NATIONS BY STUDENTS IN NORTHWESTERN ARKANSAS

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Much of the agricultural production of Arkansas is sold to other nations. Whether the youth of Arkansas realize it or not, Arkansas is an important force in supplying agricultural products throughout the world; therefore, the well-being of many Arkansans is tied directly to the lives and welfare of people in other areas of the world. Likewise, economic conditions in Arkansas have an impact on the lives of people throughout the world. This study reports on an attempt to determine how rural students in the Arkansas Valley perceive of other nations and their people and how these perceptions change during the school years.

Previous research into the attitudes of American students toward other nations and people has led to the formation of a developmental hypotheses. (Pike and Barrows,1979) Students in grade four have a clearly identifiable point of view about other nations described by these characteristics: 1. desirable, rich, strong, and like us; and 2. rich, strong, and large. The eighth grade perspective adds the three characteristics desirable people, small nation, and people not free.

The research reported here duplicates a portion of the study by Pike and Barrows. However, because of unclear documentation in

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the data analysis techniques in the original study, the data presented has been analyzed using different techniques.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Permission was obtained from Educational Testing Services to use the appropriate instruments from the OTHER NATIONS OTHER PEOPLES study by Pike and Barrows. The fourth grade instrument Describing Nations is a modification of the semantic differential format. Twenty-two adjectives are randomly arranged on the page. The students circle the words which describe the nation listed at the top of the page. The fourth grade students were asked about the nations of Canada, China, Egypt, England, France, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Spain, and the United States. The terms offered as possible describers are: rich, peaceful, are like us, weak, many factories, friendly, warm weather, happy, small, many people, many farms, far, strong, are not like us, warlike, poor, unfriendly, large, cold weather, few people, unhappy, near. The eighth grade instrument, Describing Nations and Peoples, is a semantic differential test with seven possible choices for degree of agreement. Students are asked to describe a set of nations and on separate instruments the people of each nation. Eighth grade students were asked about the same nations as the fourth graders except that Canada was omitted and East Germany and India were added to the list. The semantic differential scales for the nations are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

good	bad
poor	rich
peaceful	warlike
selfish	generous
strong	weak
untrustworthy	trustworthy
democratic	undemocratic
reckless	cautious
small	large
unchanging	changing
many people	few people
unfriendly	friendly

The fourteen semantic differential scales on the 8th grade survey concerning the people of the nations include seven of the same scales used for the view of the nations. The following adjectives are the common group: good-bad, rich-poor, peaceful-warlike, generous-selfish, strong-weak, trustworthy-untrustworthy, friendly-unfriendly. The seven additional scales include:

mostly industrial workers - mostly farmers

free - not free

educated - uneducated

willing - stubborn

happy - unhappy

are like us - are not like us

many rights - few rights

THE SAMPLE

The sample is drawn from the public schools of Dover and Dardanelle Arkansas. Both of the school systems are located in the Arkansas River Valley and have students from the respective small cities and a large rural area of small land holdings. Each of the school systems has one elementary school, a middle school, and a high school.

PROCEDURES

The survey was administered during the months of November 1982 through January 1983. The individual classroom teachers administered the instrument following a set of written directions. They were instructed to have all students who were present on the designated day take part in the survey. In the analysis all 153 of the valid fourth grade responses were used. A random stratified sample of 90 students from the eighth grade was used in the analysis. Each survey was examined to determine that the students were making valid responses. Those forms eliminated included: all incomplete forms defined as missing the responses to one or more of the pages of the survey, any obvious pattern such as an " X" or a systematic response. The response of all middle ratings on the eighth grade survey was accepted as valid providing some of the nations had a variety of responses. Both researchers agreed before eliminating a survey form because of a patterned response.

THE PERCEPTION OF THE FOURTH GRADE SAMPLE

To determine that the survey responses were measuring opinions of 4th graders, a Chi-square relation between each variable and the expected distribution was computed. A distribution significantly different from chance was considered to reflect some form of knowledge. Whether that knowledge was formally obtained as a result of direct instruction in school or obtained informally from having heard or read statements about nations can not be directly determined.

All of the twenty-two adjectives used on the survey were statistically different from chance for some of the nations. The only adjective that was not significantly different from chance for the majority of nations was "large" which was perceived significantly different for only four of the nations. The six adjectives far, warlike, unfriendly, cold weather, are like us, and weak always had a distribution significantly different from chance. By circling the word, the student indicated that the word was characteristic of the nation. The non-circled adjectives were not seen as characteristics of the nation.

By examining the number of significant responses made for each nation, it was possible to determine the comparative degree of "knowledge" that the students had on each nation. The number of significant responses per nation is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Number of Significant Responses for Each Nation

Made by Fourth Grade Students

Nation	Responses
U. S. A.	22
Canada	20
Spain	19
France	19
Russia	18
Egypt	17
Mexico	17
China	17
England	17
Israel	16
Japan	15

Not surprisingly the students had the greatest knowledge about the characteristics of the United States. The fourth graders saw our northern neighbor Canada with the second degree of "knowledge," and the only nation with the characteristic <u>are like us</u>. Mexico, America's southern neighbor, was seen with the same degree of "knowledge" as such diverse nations as China, Egypt, and England. Fourth graders registered a rather strong opinion of the characteristics of Russia. Russia ranked fifth in the degree of "knowledge" ahead of such major American allies as England, Japan, and Israel and our southern neighbor Mexico.

The fourth graders selected a few of the adjectives as the major characteristics that described the nations. Table 3 lists

the adjectives that 55% of the students said were characteristics of each of the nations. The largest number of adjectives were used to describe the U.S.A. including the only use of many factories and many farms. Canada was the only nation described as near, and the only nation described with the negative adjectives warlike and unfriendly was Russia. The majority of nations were described with the terms warm weather, many people, far, strong, friendly, and peaceful. Happy, large, and rich were used to describe four or five of the nations. The five terms never used as describers by 55% of the students were small, are not like us, poor, few people, and unhappy.

Noting those adjectives that were not considered characteristics of a nation was also informative. At least half of the nations were seen as not having the following fourteen characteristics by at least 55% of the 4th graders: unhappy, few people, many farms, unfriendly, warlike, are like us, weak, small, poor, cold weather, near, are not like us, many factories, and rich. Unhappy was not a characteristics of any of the 11 nations. Ten nations did not have the four characteristics of few people, many farms, unfriendly, and warlike. Weak, small, poor and not like us, was not characteristic of nine nations. Seven nations were seen as not near and six nations as not having many factories, being rich, or not like us. Table 4 lists the "not a characteristic" responses by specific nations.

It appears that the 4th graders viewed nations in a predominately positive way. Seven of the nations, including the U.S.A., were described as having the characteristics peaceful and happy. All of those seven except China were also described as

happy. All were clearly positive attributes. The describers that were clearly negative were almost never applied to the nations. None of the nations was seen as being unhappy. Only Russia was seen as unfriendly or warlike while none of the remaining ten nations had either of these negative traits. Nine of the nations were seen as not having the characteristics of being poor or weak. It was interesting that 4th graders clearly viewed Russia as having negative characteristics which other nations did not have. Russia was clearly seen as different in this aspect from the other nations in the survey.

Educators are interested in knowing how the students learned about the nations on the survey, which attributes are formally taught in the schools and which of the attributes are informally learned. The degree to which nations are warlike or peaceful should be revealed through the study of the history of a nation or world history. Geography teaches the physical size of nations and their populations. The distance to nations and climatic characteristics are also studied in geography. The economic factors which characterize a nation are topics in both the disciplines of geography and history.

An examination of the responses of the students revealed that they had not mastered these types of knowledge. The 4th graders made many errors on the economic factors. Japan, Canada, and Russia were not recognized as rich nations. Only the U.S.A. was recognized as having many farms, and such industrialized nations as Japan, England, and Russia were seen by the majority of students as not having many factories. The fourth graders attributed warm weather to all nations except Canada, and cold

weather was not a describer of Russia, Japan, or China. The students also made surprising errors in the size of nations: Japan and England were not recognized as small nations, and Russia was not given as a large nation. Almost all of the nations were credited with having a large population whereas the U.S.A., Russia, China, and Japan were the only nations in the group with populations large enough to rank among the twenty nations with the largest populations. Mexico, China, and Egypt were described by the majority of students as not being poor. Only one nation was seen as warlike whereas since WW II Israel and Egypt have fought wars, and the Japanese were a major military enemy in WW II. It appeared that the 4th graders generally view nations in predominately positive terms, perhaps because the students perceived of the U.S.A. in emotionally positive terms and transferred that image to nations that were considered friends of the U.S.A.

THE PERCEPTION OF THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS

Eighth grade students responded to two types of semantic differential instruments: one surveyed how the students perceived individual nations while the second group asked about characteristics of the people in the same group of nations. To determine if the students made meaningful responses on the questionnaires, the following assumption was made. The student who recognized that he/she did not know anything or enough about a nation or people selected the middle response from the seven options available on the semantic differential scale. Therefore,

a response significantly different from the middle, or fourth response, represented "knowledge" which would be either accurate or a reflection of a stereotype. Each of the semantic differential scales was tested against a hypothetical mean of a distribution in which the students responded with the fourth level of choice or the "no knowledge" option through the use of the T-test.

Table 5 gives the number of significant responses for each nation and for the people of each nation. Sixteen of the responses were significant at the .001 level, and the remainder of the significant responses were at the .000 level or higher.

Table 5

Number of Significant Responses on the

Eighth Grade Questionnaires

View of the Nation	View of the People
12 USA	13 USA
11 England	12 England
10 France	10 France
9 Russia	10 Russia
7 India	8 Israel
6 China	7 India
6 Spain	6 Egypt
6 Japan	6 Spain
5 Israel	6 Japan
4 East Germany	5 Mexico
3 Mexico	4 East Germany
2 Egypt	2 China

It was clear that the eighth grade students had strong views on the characteristics of some nations and their people and considerably weaker views on other nations. The Rho rank order correlation comparing the strength of the 8th graders' views on nations and on the people of the nations is .783. In comparing the responses on the nations with the people of the nations, it is clear that the students tended to view the people and the nation with very similar degrees of certainty. The first four rankings were identical for both the nation and the people. Students indicated that they knew more about the people of Israel and Egypt than the nations, and more about the nation of China than its people.

The attribute scales selected as describers of at least half of the nations included: peaceful - warlike, friendly - unfriendly, rich - poor, good - bad, many people - few people, strong - weak, trustworthy - untrustworthy, large - small. Fewer than half of the nations were described with the scales generous - selfish, changing - unchanging, democratic - undemocratic, and cautious - reckless. Table 6 lists the scales by which the eighth graders described each nation.

Eleven attribute scales were given significant responses on at least half of the survey on the people of the nations. Good - bad, peaceful - warlike, strong - weak, educated - uneducated, many rights - few rights, friendly - unfriendly, like us - not like us, free - not free, rich - poor, trustworthy - untrustworthy, and happy - unhappy were the scales that the eighth graders selected most frequently. The remaining three scales(

industrial workers - many farms, generous - selfish, and willing - stubborn) were used to describe fewer than half of the people of the nations surveyed. Table 7 lists the scales used to describe the people of each nation.

Not surprisingly the eighth graders knew much more about the U.S.A. than they did about other nations. They also saw the U.S.A. in a favorable light. Each scale was significantly different from the mean, and the response was toward the positive end of the semantic differential scale. Generally, all of the nations except Russia and her ally East Germany were judged to be peaceful, friendly, trustworthy, good, and generous. Russia and East Germany were described in the negative as bad, warlike, selfish, and unfriendly. Untrustworthy and nondemocratic were additional attributes used to describe Russia. China, the only other nation in the survey with a communist form of government, was perceived as good, peaceful, and friendly. It would appear that the eighth graders clearly viewed Russia and her allies in the negative whereas they viewed all of the other nations as having positive and friendly behaviors. It may be that an important portion of the perception of a nation stems from wheather the pupil views the nation as a potential enemy or a military threat.

However, the positive view of other nations did not blindly extend to economic factors. Mexico and India were described as both poor and weak and Israel as poor. England, France, and Russia - in that order - were the three nations about which the eighth graders knew the most information. Little appeared to be known about Israel, East Germany, Mexico, and Egypt. India,

China, Spain, and Japan were described with a moderate number of attributes. Japan was described in economically accurate terms: rich, strong, changing, and as having many people. The eighth graders also saw Japan as large, which is not accurate and perhaps reflects the erroneous conclusion that wealthy nations are large.

The perceptions of the eighth graders reflected some accurate knowledge and some misinformation. Those concepts associated with geography and economics such as the wealth, strength, size, and population of nations were mostly accurate. However, the concepts from history and political science (peaceful- warlike, democratic- nondemocratic, and changing - unchanging) contained errors which appeared to be a result of either a lack of facts or the inability to interpret facts.

The survey instrument for the perceptions of the people of the nations contained six of the same scales as the instrument measuring the perceptions of the nations. It is reasonable to expect that the students interpreted the good - bad, peaceful - warlike, friendly - unfriendly, rich - poor, and trustworthy - untrustworthy similarly for both instruments. However, the attributes strong - weak may be interpreted quite differently when applied to individuals of a nation rather than the nation as a whole. Nations could be considered strong or weak because of military or economic factors. People might be called strong or weak as a result of economic or personality variables. The survey on the people used the two scales many rights - few rights and free - not free in place of the democratic - nondemocratic scale of the nation survey. Six of the scales on the people survey were new responses for the students. Three of the new scales (educated

- uneducated, like us - not like us, and happy - unhappy) received significant responses for at least half of the nations. The three scales industrial workers - many farms, generous - selfish, and willing - stubborn received significant responses for fewer than six of the nations.

A factor analysis of the eighth grade surveys revealed that the variables on the nation portion of the survey loaded on three factors, and the variables for the perception of the people of the nations loaded on three factors. The nation perceptions loaded on factors which could be interpreted as a desirable nation, the political/economic character, and the size in both area and population. The people were viewed in a positive or favorable manner with all of the survey's variables except two loading on the desirable factor. The remaining factors loaded individually on the wealth and occupation factors. It would appear that the sample was perceiving nations and their people in a limited way as having pleasant, desirable characteristics or on the basis of predominately economic and geographic measures of strength and wealth.

The 8th grade sample had a well-defined view of the nations and people. Most nations were described in favorable and positive terms such as: <u>good</u>, <u>peaceful</u>, <u>happy</u>, and <u>friendly</u>. The people also tended to be described in positive terms, but the people were not considered to be like Americans. Russia and her ally, East Germany, were seen in negative terms: <u>unfriendly</u>, <u>bad</u>, <u>warlike</u>, and <u>selfish</u>. The people of Russia and East Germany were also seen as having the same negative attributes as the nations and described as <u>not like us</u>. Other people characterized as <u>not like</u>

us were from the developing nations. While these nations were not described with negative character attributes, the 8th graders were quite aware of the facts about the economics of the nations and their lack of an educated population. The descriptions given for the nations reflected generally accurate knowledge about the geographical size, population size, and economic strength of the nations. While evidence was given of greater factual knowledge, the 8th graders did not appear to be able to separate the people of the nation from the government of that nation.

SUMMARY

Both the 4th and 8th grade students made strong responses when asked for their perceptions of nations. Previous research (Pike & Barrows, 1976) found that identifiable views on nations began to emerge during the elementary school years. The same research reported that the early identifiable view of other nations remained with the students as they increased in age. The views of older students also tended to increase in complexity but still revealed that the earliest view continued as the factor with the greatest explanatory power. Another common finding was that the perception of Russia was very different from the perception of the U.S.A. and other nations. The research on the students in Arkansas supported these same general conclusions and the developmental explanation.

Even though the survey instruments were not identical, some parallels in the responses of the 4th and 8th graders were identified. The Rho correlation comparing the rank order of the

number of significant responses on the attributes of a nation for the common set of nations was .65. (See Table 7) This correlation indicated that there was a similarity between the strength of the responses made by 4th and 8th graders on the order of the nations on which the students knew the greatest amount. Both the 4th and the 8th graders had the same order of response for the U.S.A., France, Russia, and China which indicated a strongly held view on these nations. The number of significant responses made for England increased its rank position from fifth in the 4th grade to second in the 8th grade survey. Japan also increased in rank from tenth to sixth. The strength of the view on Spain and Egypt decreased considerably between the 4th and 8th grade while Mexico's rank decreased somewhat less. Few responses were made for Israel by the 4th and 8th grade students.

An examination of the social studies curriculum used by the students indicated that the 5th grade studied American geography and history; the 6th grade, world history including sections on China, Japan, and India; 7th grade, U.S. and world geography; and 8th grade, U. S. history. The increased accuracy of the 8th graders' knowledge on those concepts related to economics and geography may well have been a direct result of the school curriculum. The 4th graders' original lack of accurate knowledge on geographic and economic concepts may also have been a direct result of the lack of a formal social studies curriculum for the primary grades. Textbooks for social studies were not purchased by either school system for grades K-3. Neither was there a perscribed or suggested school system curriculum guide for social studies content and skills prior to grade 4.

The fourth graders tended to describe nations with favorable character terms: peaceful, friendly, and happy; all of these characteristics loaded on the factor Desirable nation according to the Pike and Barrows study. (p. 97) Eighth graders tended to use the same attributes to describe nations and also included the favorable character terms of trustworthy and good, which were not on the 4th grade instrument. Therefore, the presence of an early perception of nations which still remained strong in the 8th grade was supported by the study.

The presence of an early negative view toward Russia was also evident by the selection of the negative character traits of warlike, and unfriendly to describe Russia by the 4th graders. The negative view continued among the 8th grade sample with the terms warlike, unfriendly, bad, untrustworthy, unhappy, and selfish selected as describers of Russia.

The Arkansas students sampled viewed other nations and their people favorably except for Russia and her ally East Germany. However, the students might have been expressing an ethnocentric view in that they failed to describe other nations as like us. In other words, the Arkansas sample tended to see other nations and people favorably as friendly, good, peaceful, etc. but not like Americans or the U.S.A.

REFERENCES

Pike, L. W. and Barrows, T. S. Other nations, other peoples: a survey of student interests and knowledge, attitudes and perceptions (Final report 9) 1976, Educational Testing Services, U. S. Dept. of H. E. W. contract no. OEC-0-72-4618.

Table 3

Attributes by whic' at Least 55% of the 4TH Graders Describe Nations

USA	CANADA	SPAIN	FRANCE	RUSSIA	EGYPT
peaceful	peaceful	rich	rich	warm weather	warm weather
rich	are like us	peaceful	peaceful	many people	far
many factories	weak	friendly	friendly	far	strong
friendly	friendly	warm weather	warm weather	strong	
warm weather	happy	many people	happy	warlike	
happy	many people	far	many people	unfriendly	
many farms	large	strong	far		
many people	cold weather		strong		
strong	near		large		
large					
cold weather					

MEXICO	CHINA	ENGLAND	ISRAEL	JAPAN
peaceful	peaceful	rich	warm weather	warm weather
friendly	friendly	peaceful	far	many people
warm weather	warm weather	friendly	strong	far
happy	many people	warm weather		strong
many people	far	happy		
large	strong	many people		
	large	far		

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Table 4

Attributes Which Are Not Characteristics of Nations Agreed upon by at Least 55% of the Fourth Graders

CANADA	RUSSIA	ISRAEL	CHINA	ENGLAND
rich	rich	rich	rich	are like us
weak	peaceful	are like us	are like us	many factories
warm weather	are like us	happy	weak	small
small	weak	many farms	many factories	many farms
many farms	friendly	are not like us	small	warlike
far	many factories	warlike	many farms	poor
strong	happy	large	warlike	unfriendly
are not like us	many farms	unfriendly	poor	cold weather
warlike	are not like us	cold weather	unfriendly	few people
poor	large	few people	cold weather	unhappy
unfriendly	cold weather	unhappy	few people	near
few people	unhappy	near	unhappy	
unhappy	few people		near	

Table 6

National Attributes Given Significant Responses by Eighth Grade Students

USA	ENGLAND	FRANCE	RUSSIA	INDIA	CHINA
good	good	good	bad	poor	good
rich	rich	rich	warlike	peaceful	rich
peaceful	peaceful	peaceful	selfish	weak	peaceful
generous	generous	generous	strong	trustworthy	large
strong	strong	strong	untrustworthy	large	many people
trustworthy	trustworthy	trustworthy	nondemocratic	many people	friendly
democratic	democratic	cautious	large	friendly	
cautious	cautious	changing	many people		
large	changing	many people	unfriendly		
changing	many people	friendly			
many people	friendly				
friendly					

SPAIN	JAPAN	ISRAEL	EAST GERMANY	MEXICO	EGYPT
good	good	poor	bad	poor	peaceful
rich	rich	peaceful	warlike	peaceful	friendly
peaceful	strong	trustworthy	selfish	weak	
trustworthy	large	small	unfriendly		
many people	changing	friendly			
friendly	many people				

Table 7

Significant Attributes of the People as Perceived by Eighth Graders

USA	ENGLAND	FRANCE	RUSSIA	ISRAEL	INDIA
industrial workers	free	free	not free	mostly farmers	mostly farmers
free	good	good	bad	free	poor
good	rich	peaceful	warlike	good	peaceful
rich	peaceful	strong	selfish	poor	weak
peaceful	generous	trustworthy	strong	peaceful	few rights
generous	strong	many rights	untrustworthy	untrustworthy	uneducated
strong	trustworthy	educated	few rights	unfriendly	not like us
trustworthy	many rights	willing	unfriendly	like us	
many rights	educated	friendly	not like us		
educated	willing	happy	unhappy		
willing	friendly				
friendly	happy				
happy					

EGYPT	SPAIN	JAPAN	MEXICO	EAST GERMANY	CHINA
mostly farmers	good	good	mostly farmers	not free	strong
good	peaceful	rich	poor	selfish	not like us
peaceful	trustworthy	strong	few rights	few rights	
weak	educated	educated	uneducated	not like us	
uneducated	friendly	friendly	not like us		
not like us	happy	happy			

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Table 8

Ranking of Nations by Order of the Number of Significant Responses for Grades 4 and 8

4TH GRADE		8TH GRADE	
1	U.S.A.	1	U.S.A.
2	Spain	2	England
2	France	3	France
4	Russia	4	Russia
5	Egypt	5	China
5	Mexico	5	Japan
5	China	5	Spain
5	England	8	Israel
9	Israel	9	Mexico
10	Japan	10	Egypt